

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BAGHDA 00899 281110Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 /068 W

-----290301Z 113225 /73

R 280744Z MAY 77

FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4612

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0899

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINR IZ

SUBJECT: SADDAM HUSSEIN IS BACK ON STAGE

1. IRAQI STRONGMAN SADDAM HUSSEIN MADE HIGHLY PUBLICIZED APPEARANCES MAY 24 AT MINISTRY OF WORKS AND HOUSING AND AT MINISTRY OF PLANNING. THESE ARE HUSSEIN'S FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCES SINCE APRIL 18, AND HIS ABSENCE FROM VIEW HAD BECOME CAUSE FOR INCREASINGLY WILD RUMORS.

2. TO JUDGE BY NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHS (FRONT PAGE ON ALL BAGHDAD DAILIES OF MAY 25) AND BY TELEVISION NEWS FOOTAGE, HUSSEIN HAS LOST WEIGHT DURING HIS CONVALESCENCE. TV WATCHERS NOTED THAT HE WAS WALKING WITH AN UNUSUALLY RIGID POSTURE AND SAT IN STRAIGHTBACKED WOODEN CHAIR AT MINISTRY OF PLANNING WHILE ALL OTHER OFFICIALS WERE IN USUAL OVERSTUFFED EASY-CHAIRS. PRESS REPORTS DESCRIBED  
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LARGE CROWDS LINING STREETS IN FRONT OF MINISTRIES TO CHEER HUSSEIN.

3. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT HUSSEIN REQUIRES CONTINUED REST FOR HIS MEDICAL CONDITION AND THAT HIS RETURN TO PUBLIC VIEW WAS CAREFULLY STAGED TO DAMPEN RUMORS WHICH HAVE RANGED FROM HIS HOSPITALIZATION IN U.S. TO HIS DISABLE-

MENT FROM GUNSHOT WOUNDS. ADHERENTS TO THIS THEORY BELIEVE THAT HUSSEIN WILL CAREFULLY LIMIT HIS PUBLIC ACTIVITIES FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD WHILE MANAGING AFFAIRS OF STATE THROUGH TRUSTED SUBORDINATES.

4. COMMENT: GENERAL REACTION OF IRAQI PUBLIC WILL PROBABLY BE RELIEF THAT HUSSEIN IS STILL IN CHARGE UNDER SUPPORTIVE AEGIS OF PRESIDENT BAKR. SADEUM HUSSEIN IS NOT LOVED BY IRAQI MASSES, BUT THEY APPRECIATE RELATIVE ORDER AND STABILITY WHICH HAS REPLACED PERIODIC BLOODLETTINGS OF ERA BETWEEN 1958 AND HIS CONSOLIDATION OF POWER.  
MACK

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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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